DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 225 269 EA 015 302

AUTHOR Crandall, David P.; Loucks, Susan F.
TITLE Preparing Facilitators for Implementation: Mirroring the School Improvement Process. A Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement.
INSTITUTION Network of Innovative Schools, Inc., Andover, Mass.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC. Office of Planning, Budget, and Evaluation.
PUB DATE Mar 82
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, NY, March 19-23, 1982).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Agents; Change Strategies; Educational Change; *Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Program Implementation; *Social Support Groups; *Training; Training Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Facilitators

ABSTRACT

A review of five of their own research findings suggests (to the authors) four strategies for preparing facilitators to help implement school improvement programs. "Facilitators" are people who support teachers in implementing new classroom practices, and can include principals, district staff, or external providers of support. The five findings concern fitting preparation to needs, commitment, training specific to new practices, posttraining followup, and the variety of people who play facilitating roles. Indepth discussion of each finding, based on personal experience, shows that (1) different intentions or needs require different preparations or training, so that facilitators with more to learn will require more extensive training; (2) commitment to a new practice is a precursor to success; (3) training should be specific to facilitator roles and skills and should include actual facilitating; (4) followup assistance for facilitators is needed, including coaching and resources; and (5) facilitators should be aware of where best they can facilitate, given their official role in the system. The four strategies suggested for facilitator development would apply for different situations and tasks. They include facilitator selection, formal facilitator training, development of support systems (such as principals' centers), and networking to provide assistance. (RW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

David P. Crandall

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED225269

PREPARING FACILITATORS FOR IMPLEMENTATION: MIRRORING THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

David P. Crandall

Susan F. Loucks

A Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement

The NETWORK, Inc.
290 South Main Street
Andover, Massachusetts 01810

March 1982

EA 015 302

Presented at American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York City, March 1982.

Preparing Facilitators for Implementation: Mirroring the School Improvement Process[1]

David P. Crandall
Susan F. Loucks

The NETWORK, Inc.

Implementation of new practices has been a concern of educators for a long time, but it is only in the last ten years that it has received significant attention. Perhaps this has resulted from the relative failure of many major innovative efforts of the 60's to "get behind the classroom door"; many suggest that the innovations weren't to blame, rather that management and support of implementation were. Major studies (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978, Crandall, et al., 1982; Hall, et al., 1980) point to the importance of implementation, and particularly to the need for a constellation of actors to play support roles to teachers implementing new classroom practices. How do these actors, including principals, district level staff, and external facilitators, get prepared to take on these roles? What new knowledge and skills do they need, and how can these best be acquired?

We bring to this paper more than thirty years of collective experience conducting research on implementation, training implementation facilitators (from school, district, intermediate agency, university, state and federal levels), facilitating implementation in schools and universities, and being the targets of implementation efforts as teachers and district staff. We have been and are still involved in most of the major federal dissemination efforts -- the National Diffusion Network, FSEA Title IV-C, the R&D Utilization Program, ERIC, Project Information Packages (PIPs) -- as well as several local development and implementation projects. In this paper we bring these experiences to bear on the question of what to consider in preparing implementation facilitators.

---

1 The research referred to in this paper was conducted under contract with the U.S. Department of Education, the Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education, and no endorsement by the Department should be inferred.

Other papers in this symposium (Fullan, 1982; Marsh, 1982) derive from actual, comprehensive courses of study for individuals in facilitator roles. Ours is different. Instead of developing a complete training program, we propose some things that could be considered in preparing facilitators, propositions that could influence both the process and content of a program in major ways. The paper has three sections. First, we suggest that the process of preparing facilitators should mirror the process of preparing teachers to implement new practices. We do so by describing several key findings from our implementation research that appear to have parallel implications for preparing facilitators. Second, we discuss these findings in light of our experiences, and suggest applications to facilitator preparation. Finally, we describe four strategies for responding to the need for skillful, knowledgeable facilitators -- selection, training/education, developing a support system, and networking. We discuss when and where these responses are most appropriate, providing examples of each.

School Improvement Research and the Preparation of Facilitators

It was typical ten years ago (and unfortunately, not unheard of today) to expect school improvement to occur by conducting a few "Hello, good-bye, God bless you" teacher workshops. For several days during the summer, or for several Saturdays or after-school sessions during the school year, teachers were introduced to a new idea, program or practice. Materials were delivered to the school. The expectation was that use would begin and be under control immediately, and by the end of the year an evaluation would tell if the new practice had been effective.

We learned the hard way that school improvement doesn't occur that way. Evaluations showed no significant differences; teachers and principals were frustrated and became cynical; and studies indicated that, for all the federal and local expenditures, nothing had really changed "behind the classroom door" (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Goodlad & Associates, 1970).

In more recent years we've learned why failures occurred (or why success wasn't discovered); research and experience have both contributed to understanding critical features of preparing teachers for successful school improvement that go beyond one-shot training sessions.

Before we discuss these features, we turn to the task at hand, that of suggesting how one might approach the training of facilitators whose responsibility it is to orchestrate, or at least play major roles in, school improvement efforts. We believe that preparing facilitators for their roles in such efforts is analogous to preparing teachers for theirs. Both are adult learners, and so what we know about helping adults adopt new roles and behaviors should apply to both. Both are, in a sense, "adopting new practices" -- teachers by changing their curricula or instructional behaviors, facilitators in learning new behaviors that support teachers in these efforts to improve. In addition,

there are similarities in the social systems within which both groups work (often, in fact, they work in the same social system). When these systems are loosely-coupled, the individuals within them tend to be isolated (i.e., both teachers and facilitators commonly act as loners). There is a hierarchy in both systems that has responsibility for both regulation/evaluation and support/assistance. Slack resources, or resources that can be reallocated, may be used to operationalize and/or enhance one of these responsibility areas over the other. And finally, it is often unclear when individuals within these systems are "successful," what the criteria are for good teaching or good facilitating, and what outcomes are being sought. Reflecting on these similarities in the work life of teachers and facilitators provoked us to speculate on ways to apply findings from school improvement research to the preparation of facilitators.

Selected Findings from School Improvement Research

The Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement focused on factors influencing implementation of new practices at the local level. In it, we gathered information from teachers, principals and central office personnel in 146 school districts where a new practice had been adopted or developed under the auspices of one of four federal programs: the National Diffusion Network, the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped Market-Linkage Program, ESEA Title IV-C Local Development Projects, and state-administered dissemination programs. We also included data gathered from external facilitators, individuals from outside the school district with responsibility for assisting in the implementation of the specific practice. The data were used both to characterize the individuals and institutions who were involved in these diverse school improvement efforts, as well as to explain what factors influenced the various outcomes of these efforts. For a more detailed description of the Study and its findings, see Crandall et al., 1982.

Findings from the Study have direct implications for helping teachers improve their practices. We have selected five findings that seem most appropriate to the preparation of facilitators. The findings are:

- Different preparation and interventions are necessary, depending on how different a new practice is from what teachers are already doing in their classrooms.
- Commitment to the new practice is essential to successful implementation, since it influences the time spent in classroom use of the practice, which in turn leads to more teacher change and greater perceived benefits.
- Training needs to be specific to the roles and skills required of the new practice, including opportunities to practice them both in the training environment and afterward in the classroom setting.

- After training, follow-up assistance is essential for coaching in newly-learned behaviors, provisioning with appropriate equipment and supplies, solving of implementation problems, and maintaining commitment.

- A constellation of players contributes a wide variety of assistance to teachers involved in improvement efforts. These players include other teaching staff, school principals, local district personnel, and external facilitators -- each of whom brings assistance and support at different times and in different ways.

We discuss each of these Study findings below, enriching them with learnings from our personal experiences, and applying them when appropriate to the preparation of facilitators.

Different Intentions Require Different Interventions

Teachers face very different circumstances at the onset of an improvement effort, depending on how different the new practice is from what they have been doing in their classrooms. We found two groups, one in which teachers were attempting a relatively minor change, the other in which a rather major change was demanded by the new practice. We found that those in the minor changes group accomplished those few changes required when they had a strong sense of commitment and time to use the practice. The major change group, on the other hand, benefited from more direct interventions: assistance from a local facilitator and school principal, greater readiness prior to beginning implementation, and increased time spent in classroom use of the practice.

This learning implies several things for working with teachers in a school improvement effort -- and it also suggests ideas for preparing facilitators. The role of facilitator -- at any level -- is a relatively new one. External linkers, especially those working with federally-supported programs, have been around for barely ten years. School district personnel, usually trained in specific curriculum areas, are often placed in roles requiring more general process skills (e.g., needs assessment, resource identification, implementation planning). And school principals, trained to be administrators, are expected to take roles as "instructional leaders," which we see as facilitating school improvement.

Our experience is that individuals in facilitator roles range widely in the skills and understandings needed to be successful. So, preparing facilitators needs to begin with carefully assessing where each is and how far each individual needs to go in changing roles and behaviors. Our finding helps us to conceptualize the interventions we would make.

For facilitators who have a relatively short distance to go, it is most important to build their enthusiasm and commitment, perhaps by providing a short but intense group training experience that

develops their espirit d'corps and helps them fine-tune behaviors that are already part of their repertoire. Then send them off. On the other hand, facilitators who have major changes to make (e.g., those who are new to the role) would benefit from extensive training, with assistance and ongoing support from their superiors and colleagues, and time allotted specifically for using (and so practicing) their newly acquired skills. Many of these specific interventions we discuss later in the paper. Here we stress the need to differentiate what we do for facilitators, depending on the distance they need to go (their knowledge and skill gap) to become competent and confident in their facilitator roles.

Commitment As a Precursor to Success

In the Study, we found that the more teachers felt committed to a new practice, the more they changed their behaviors to implement the practice, and the more beneficial they found it to be. This somewhat typical finding can be applied directly to preparing facilitators: if we want them to change their practices in ways that are beneficial, we need to help them develop a commitment to acquiring and behaving in the new role.

Our experiences suggest that one way to foster commitment is to make training clearly and concretely relevant to the learners, in this case, facilitators. Sessions on change theory, problem-solving and supervision are only helpful if they provide tools, strategies, and directed practice in applying the learnings to the settings in which the facilitators work. For example, postulating that teachers with whom the facilitators work will experience different kinds of concerns as they tackle a new practice has limited value. Giving facilitators one or two ways of assessing teacher concerns, allowing them time to use one of those ways, and reconvening them for an in-depth discussion of the data gathered and its implications for their behavior, can bring direct relevance to the new understandings and develop meaningful, useful new skills.

Providing concrete experiences that have relevance, and so enhances commitment in facilitators, requires that we be very clear about the skills and understandings we want them to develop. These need to be articulated and shared in writing so they understand expectations and can gauge their own growth. In the Study, we used a method for defining the teacher-targeted innovations we studied called Practice Profiles, which identified critical components of the practice and described them behaviorally in terms of possible variations that might be used, ranging from ideal through acceptable to unacceptable (Loucks and Crandall, 1982). Such a profile might be constructed to describe desired facilitator behaviors, clarifying expectations and skills for development that are concretely tied to the work they do.

Another possible influence on commitment -- this time providing extrinsic motivation -- is for the superiors of individuals in facilitator roles to set clear expectations for their behaviors

and activities. Our experiences tell us that such a "mandate," when linked with the type of training described above, provides the extra kick needed to energize the chain leading to successful improvement.

Going Beyond Training as Typically Conceived

For facilitators undergoing major changes in their roles and behaviors, training that develops understandings specific to their new roles, and which allows for practice and application is critical. In the Study, we found that teachers who spent more time actually using the new practice in their classrooms, experienced more actual change. This seems to be analogous to the "time-on-task" research that relates student achievement to the amount of engaged time students spend in instructional activities. We might reasonably speculate that facilitators should likewise spend time practicing the behaviors required by their new roles.

This is often not easy, given that, first of all, facilitators often wear several hats. In addition, the "facilitator" hat often remains on the shelf in the crisis situations that facilitators face in their other roles. For example, when Johnny and Bill just had a fight on the playground, and the PTA President calls demanding to know why lunch costs just increased, it's difficult for a principal to spend time helping teachers carefully analyze a set of new practices so they can choose the best one for their situation. A district-level facilitator may find it hard to get out to schools to trouble-shoot a newly implemented practice when the school board just requested a new budget justification.

So spending time "facilitating" is not always easy, but providing for such time must be made a priority. Again, having the support of superiors is critical; they need to be understanding when told that the facilitator is "out in the classrooms" or "out in the schools" when they call requesting an answer to an "important" question. This necessity to actually practice skills introduced in training underscores the need to expand the training experience's boundaries well beyond the formal training events.

Follow-Up Assistance

Again, we advocate going beyond training sessions in preparing facilitators. Facilitators implementing new roles, like teachers implementing new practices, have needs beyond the initial understandings they gain and skills they are introduced to in artificial training events. These needs are largely idiosyncratic: they arise from new ideas and behaviors interacting with the particular settings in which the facilitator works. When tried out, the ideas that sounded so wonderful and foolproof in training, often don't work as described. Practice of new behaviors, followed by feedback or "coaching" from a non-threatening, objective observer, is one strategy that works. In addition, someone needs to make sure that necessary materials,

resources, and time are available for new facilitator behaviors to be used. Of course, moral support and encouragement are important if facilitators are to feel okay about continuing down the often rocky road to acquiring a new skill repertoire. Who might provide such a variety of follow-up assistance is our next point.

A Constellation of Assisters

In our study of school improvement, we found people in a variety of roles making specific and different kinds of contributions to the change efforts. Each complements the others, all seem required for success. Principals contributed to change in the school by structuring goals and procedures, and by being responsive to teachers' needs and input to decisions; whereas, they contributed to teacher change by their commitment to the particular practice teachers were implementing and with their direct assistance to those teachers (Bauchner and Loucks, 1982). Teachers assisted each other by providing a "critical mass" that contributed collegial and substantive support as new practices were tried out in their schools. District level facilitators contributed by assessing needs for new practices, arranging related training, and trouble-shooting with teachers after training was completed (Loucks and Cox, 1982). Finally, the contributions of external facilitators included training, providing materials, and working out the details of implementation (Cox and Havelock, 1982).

We believe the existence of such a diversity of players contributing to successful school improvement has implications for preparing facilitators as well. First, the findings about specific roles provides content for training: given your role in the system (i.e., principal, district, external), where can you best exert your energies? How can you cooperate with individuals in other roles, who are responsible for other activities, and together orchestrate a well defined and articulated school improvement effort?

Second, these findings suggest activities for others surrounding facilitators in their work. Facilitators themselves can support each other, forming that "critical mass" to share ideas, problems and concerns which increases understandings and enhances commitment. Second, those to whom facilitators are responsible (e.g., superintendents if facilitators are principals, assistant superintendents if facilitators are in central offices) can provide direction, material support, and encouragement, communicating the importance of the facilitator role and backing that with necessary resources. The roles played by district and external facilitators for teachers might have an analogue in the persons responsible for the training of facilitators: university professors, external consultants, laboratory personnel. These persons can best contribute to the preparation of facilitators by tuning into their needs and specific situations, providing training tailored to those needs, and coaching and trouble-shooting after training has occurred. Here, too, a constellation of players can be useful to successful change in practice.

These five findings from school improvement research that we have just discussed lead us to ask: what general strategies can take some or all of what we know into account to prepare facilitators with different needs for different roles? We provide one response in the next section.

Strategies for Facilitator Preparation and Support

We see four strategies that can be used to respond to the need for skillful, knowledgeable facilitators. These are: selection, training, development of a support system, and networking. Each of these strategies is activated by a different reality and by the different tasks that the facilitator needs to perform.

Selection

Some people believe that good facilitators are born, not made; they either possess such important qualities as sensitivity, organization, and enthusiasm, or they can never acquire them. If we agreed with this notion, we never would have written this paper. However, decision-makers and managers would do well to consider careful selection of facilitators as a useful strategy for providing schools with assistance. Unfortunately, individuals frequently wind up in facilitator roles by default or assignment. A superintendent decides that the district instructional staff should be "generalists," so suddenly the tenured coordinators of math, social studies, and science become "facilitators." An intermediate agency loses funding for drug education, so the specialist in that area gets moved to "instructional services," and put in a "linking agent" role.

Although unrealistic at these and other times, selection should certainly be considered as an option. It requires careful definition of what it is the facilitator will do, and then what the skills, understandings, and characteristics are that would make such an individual successful (Crandall, 1979). The cost-effectiveness of such a selection orientation far exceeds that of any other strategy, and should be considered whenever possible.

Training

Providing facilitators with formal training opportunities so they might function (more) successfully is another strategy. We have already described characteristics of such training: it should be specific to the tasks of a facilitator, provide hands-on activities and opportunities for practice and feedback, and facilitate cooperation and team-building among participants. The depth and scope of training should depend on how far the individual participants have to go to "fill the shoes" of the role they are taking or aspiring to.

Facilitator training is a rare occurrence. Programs such as those sponsored by the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education (Fullan and Drope, 1982) and the University of Southern California (Marsh, 1982) offer the opportunity to practitioners and graduate students to build their skills and understandings in inservice and university settings. The training strategy is a particularly useful one for individuals, and especially for those who initially have much to learn.

Developing a Support System

A support system, less intense than training, has the advantage of impacting a wider range of people. A support system is especially effective when there is a clear image of the objectives, activities, and eventual outcomes it is created to support. Rather than teaching directly, a support system shapes and reinforces behaviors enacted in the course of everyday work.

Notable examples of support systems for individuals who have facilitator roles are principals' centers where building administrators can get help, ideas, and encouragement at their request. Such centers (Barth, 1981) have as their objectives the upgrading of skills and understandings through the availability of training sessions, information resources, and opportunities for informal linkages. Several federal programs utilize a support system strategy -- generally called "technical assistance" -- to assist managers of federal projects and individuals responsible for school improvement in state departments.

The former include the Basic Skills National Technical Assistance Consortium, ESEA Title I Technical Assistance Centers, and the Technical Assistance Base of the National Diffusion Network. These systems work through regional centers to offer assistance to federally-supported projects in such diverse areas as management, evaluation, and product development. They use conferences, print materials, and on-site consultations to upgrade skills of project staff in developing the various facets of their facilitator roles.

The R&D Exchange is an example of a support system targeted at state-level facilitators. Through Regional Exchanges, operating in regional educational laboratories, state agency personnel involved in dissemination and school improvement are provided with information resources, training and technical assistance to develop responsive state dissemination systems, be more "plugged into" the products and results of R&D and their implication for schools, and upgrade their skills in working with local schools.

A support system appears to be most useful when serving a lot of facilitators, spread geographically, who have experience in their roles, and mostly need fine-tuning, upgrading, and reinforcement.

Networking

The most "loosely" structured form of support for facilitators, while it may be the largest in scale, comes in the form of networking. Networking is based on the assumption that the whole

is bigger than the sum of its parts, that individuals and organizations with similar roles and similar goals have much to offer each other. Linked together, they can often be activated as political constituencies to influence policy and decision-making in areas they care about.

One example of this strategy for supporting individuals with responsibility for school improvement is the National Diffusion Network. This formal federally-supported network links developers of validated innovations (Developer/Demonstrators) with people in each state (State Facilitators) whose job it is to make local schools aware of the innovations and help teachers get training and assistance in implementation. Linkages between the developers and facilitators not only serve their primary function, to make validated programs available to local schools, but also helps the "linkers" to develop skills and understandings about dissemination and school improvement.

Another network, this one less formal since its membership is open, is supported by the Teacher Center Exchange. Through the Exchange, directors of teacher centers across the country are able to communicate with each other, sharing information, ideas and strategies. Like the National Diffusion Network, the Teacher Center Exchange makes a conscious effort to develop and sustain a formal network, but with a direction that is even more low-key, light-handed, and non-directive. This helps begin and sustain the network, and deal with constant turnover in membership. It does not, however, provide the direct and structured assistance characteristic of a technical assistance system. Although both of these particular networks also employ a technical assistance strategy, other "purer" networks, professional associations such as the National Staff Development Council, merely provide facilitators with opportunities to get in touch with each other and let informal linkages develop from there.

Summary

Findings from school improvement research have helped us speculate about how individuals in facilitator roles might be prepared and supported. Depending on facilitator needs -- for initiating, developing, or sustaining their skills and understandings -- different strategies may be used, either alone or in combination. These strategies can be seen as part of a continuum. At one end is selection, the most intensive, idiosyncratic and narrow of the strategies. Training and developing a support system offer direct interventions but represent increasingly broader perspectives as well as the ability to serve larger populations. At the other end is networking, the least formal and least prescriptive of the strategies. Since facilitators are a relatively new breed of professional, but one that looks like it will be around for awhile, it behooves us to consider seriously how to best address their need for new skills and understandings, as well as for collegial interaction and support. We believe that deriving implications from improvement research and introducing them into active dialogue can assist us all in filling these important needs.

REFERENCES

Barth, R. S. A principals' center. Journal of Staff Development 2 (1), 1981.

Bauchner, J. E., & Loucks, S. F. Building administrators and their role in the improvement of practice. A Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement. Andover, MA: The NETWORK, Inc. Presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York City, 1982.

Berman, P. & McLaughlin, M. W. Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change, Vol. VIII: Implementing and Sustaining Innovations. Santa Monica, CA. Rand Corporation, 1978.

Cox, P. L., & Havelock, R. External facilitators and their role in the improvement of practice. Andover, MA: The NETWORK, Inc. Presented at American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York City, 1982.

Crandall, D. P. The linking agent: An overview. Part One of the Linking Agent's Tool Kit. Andover, MA: The NETWORK, Inc., 1979.

Crandall, D. P., Bauchner, J. E., Loucks, S. F., & Schmidt, W. Models of the school improvement process: Factors contributing to success. A Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement. Andover, MA: The NETWORK, Inc. Presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York City, 1982.

Fullan, M. & Drope, K. The preparation of curriculum consultants and administrators for program implementation, Presented at the American Education Research Association Annual Meeting, New York City, 1982.

Goodlad, J. I., Klein, M. F., & Associates. Behind the classroom door. Worthington, OH: Charles A. Jones, 1970.

Hall, G.E., et al. Making change happen: A case study of school district implementation. Austin, TX: The University of Texas R & D Center for Teacher Education, 1980.

Loucks, S. F., & Cox, P. L. School district personnel: A crucial role in school improvement efforts. A Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement. Andover, MA: The NETWORK, Inc. Presented at American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York City, 1982.

Loucks, S. F. & Crandall, D. P. The pratice profile: An all purpose tool for program communication, staff development, evaluation and improvement. Andover, MA: The NETWORK, Inc., 1982.

Marsh, D. Curriculum implementation as a focus in graduate programs for educational leaders; Presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York City, 1982.